

Army Industry Day

Responses to Questions

Note: Potential offerors and interested parties are reminded that these questions and answers as well as the industry day responses are provided as part of seeking industry input and are for preliminary information purposes only. Offerors should rely solely on the provisions, terms and conditions that are contained in the final official Request for Proposal (RFP) and any amendments thereto.

- 1. Question:** What role will minority colleges play in this effort? Are you seeking educational consortia?

Response: Army welcomes minority college participation in this effort. Army's objective in this program is to offer as wide a variety of on-line degree and certificate programs as possible to soldiers. A consortium approach is certainly one way to meet this objective.

- 2. Question:** Will there be a clear distinction made between terminal Associate Degrees and those that will be accepted by regionally accredited BA institutions?

Response: Recognizing the varied educational objectives of soldiers, we hope to offer both 'terminal' associate degree programs as well as those that lead toward an accredited bachelor degree. Army Continuing Education System (ACES) counselors are well versed in assisting soldiers to distinguish between these programs and select the appropriate one based on the soldier's education goal.

- 3. Question:** Does on-site traditional education have a role in this program?

Response: On-site traditional education providers will not be included in this contract unless they also offer on-line programs. However, we certainly anticipate these traditional providers will continue to provide their invaluable education programs to soldiers. We anticipate most students will complete their degrees by using a combination of traditional and on-line courses.

- 4. Question:** Will there be a cap on tuition?

Response: Tuition rates will be fixed by the contract. Army is seeking a price effective means to provide on-line education programs to soldiers.

- 5. Question:** Is the amount of tuition assistance standard or does it vary? If so, what is the range?

Response: DoD has established a standardized fiscal tuition assistance policy for all the Services. This policy mandates 75 percent of tuition or up to \$187.50 per semester hour, whichever is less, and an annual dollar ceiling of \$3500 per fiscal year. An exception is granted for servicemembers who are deployed to contingency operations where they receive 100 percent funding. The tuition assistance policy for this on-line program has not yet been established.

6. Question: The thrust of Army University Access On-line (AUAO) appears to be for learning opportunities via instructor-led, asynchronous delivery modes. Would a proposal including some percentage of web-synchronous be considered appropriate, especially at the graduate degree level?

Response: Yes, we are looking for as many options and choices as possible.

7. Question: It appears that all training would need to be asynchronous training if all courses are to be accessed any time. Will there also be synchronous training where students can log on at a scheduled time and take a course with an instructor and others that are signed up?

Response: While the focus of this education (not training) program is on asynchronous education opportunities, Army would like to see soldiers have a wide variety of options. A mixture of asynchronous/synchronous may well be an appropriate approach.

8. Question: Does the accredited school, who are (sic) delivering courses within the system, have to offer all requirements for a degree or can they only offer some of the accredited requirements (in an on-line DL format)?

Response: All requirements of the degree or certificate program must be offered in the on-line format. We envision an open architecture that allows for on-line courses that transfer into degree programs as a viable option.

9. Question: You have civilians stationed throughout the world. Will you ever include them in this program?

Response: Based on the program success, Army does hope to eventually offer this program to both family members and Department of the Army civilians.

10. Question: Is this enlisted only or all inclusive officers (officers, warrant officers, and enlisted)?

Response: Initially, Army will offer this program at two or three stateside installations to enlisted soldiers who have at least three years remaining in the Army. Army does hope to offer the program to officers. However, the Army already offers officers fully funded graduate degree program opportunities, thus our first focus is on enlisted programs.

11. Question: What is the role of the reserve component in AUAO? Will they participate?

Response: Army initially will offer this program to Active Component enlisted soldiers only. Our vision is to eventually include the Reserve Component as well.

12. Question: BG Frost stated that this opportunity will be offered to those soldiers who are within a minimum of 3 years of service remaining. How will this effect those career soldiers who are not yet indefinite enlistment, who have less than 3 years, but must wait until they re in their 1-year enlistment window?

Response: The U.S. Total Army Personnel Command will look at reassessing current reenlistment policy to see if it is possible to allow soldiers who are willing to reenlist to do so regardless of their one-year enlistment window in order to participate.

13. **Question:** What about pre-college coursework for learners who lack basic skills? At Class.com, we provide rigorous academic programs for high school-level learners of any age. We are the oldest on-line accredited high school in the U.S. What provisions are you making for learners who are not yet prepared for college-level work? We can strengthen the skills of students who may be part of your GED effort, but who wants actual high school courses or perhaps a diploma. How can we participate?

Response: Army Continuing Education System (ACES) currently operates robust basic skills programs at Army installations worldwide. The ACES is also in the process of automating the Army-specific basic skills curriculum to effect standardization, enhance technical skills, and ensure deployability. We applaud your on-line high school program. Currently, Army does not have a substantial requirement for high school courses.

14. **Question:** As the availability after year one of the deployed solution grows, will you offer access to those soldiers who have ETSED who have GI benefits available? The basis of the question is that those individuals could augment the costs by creating a revenue stream.

Response: At this time the program is designed for soldiers on active duty. The potential exists for expansion in the future.

15. **Question:** Initially, I understand this program is for new recruits and current military with at least 3 years left on their enlistment to first get an Associates degree or certificate and move on from there. Will it be open to all Army with at least 3 years left on their enlistment no matter the level from inception?

Response: Army University Access On-line will be offered to all eligible soldiers who wish to pursue a technical certificate/credential, associate, bachelor's, or master's degree program. It is not limited to those who begin at the associate or certificate level.

16. **Question:** How will the eArmyU.com web site allow for collaborative involvement, particularly for specialty certificate programs?

Response: The web site will list all Industry Day organization participants.

17. **Question:** How will the program effectiveness be measured? By whom? Will there be any phases of this 6-year program?

Response: We need to see how many soldiers participate in Army University Access On-line and how successful they are in completing courses, certificates, and degrees. Other program metrics will include: 1) the amount of credit that soldiers are awarded from non-traditional sources; 2) student program retention rates; 3) acceptance and/or transfer of on-line program credits; 4) amount of time required for program completion; 5) satisfaction with the technology package concept; 6) student evaluations of the program; 7) impact on recruitment and retention; and, 8) cost.

18. **Question:** Will this project exclude the integration of other media since it is planned/envisioned as an on-line project? Sometimes a mix of media is a more effective teaching strategy.

Response: No, we will not exclude the integration of other media. We are looking for as many options and choices as possible. But the primary focus is on-line education opportunities since these most clearly meet the flexibility requirement for soldiers.

19. Question: Studies have shown that mixed media, interactive distance learning that including video, PowerPoint, charts, and graphs, a white board, and messaging this is the most effective. Is it fair to assume that the Army is seeking a robust mixed-media software platform for courses?

Response: Yes, we certainly are. Simply putting a professor's lecture notes on-line and using email to reach students does not define quality on-line education. 'Interactive' is the keyword for ensuring success in on-line learning and we use this as one factor in assessing course offerings.

20. Question: It was stated that the contractor/provider will be held accountable for delivery of education. How far does this go? Is the provider merely responsible for assuring that participating universities are appropriately accredited? Ensuring the quality of each course offered by each university or community college would place the provider in an untenable situation. What are the parameters of being held accountable?

Response: The contractor must ensure soldiers have the required technology package and technology skills to ensure successful delivery of education services and programs. Although colleges and universities have a fundamental responsibility for the integrity of the academic degrees they award, the institution must be accredited by one of the U.S. Department of Education recognized and approved accrediting agencies. The contractor/provider must ensure all participating institutions are fully accredited.

21. Question: Would it make sense, considering the magnitude of this endeavor, to make this a joint military initiative?

Response: This suggestion certainly has merit. However, considering the magnitude of the effort involved to implement this initiative within Army, we are focusing only on Army.

22. Question: Will Army commanders (sic) permit short trips to campus for laboratory courses?

Response: The intent of this program is to offer degree and certificate programs completely on-line. Mission requirements do not always give commanders the flexibility to allow soldiers to meet resident course requirements. Hence, the need for this program. Some laboratory courses are currently available on-line.

23. Question: Would the offerings of Army University Access On-line have to be limited to courses of study that require no off-line components, such as laboratory experimentation or use of technologies that are not yet accessible?

Response: The courses offered under Army University Access On-line MUST be offered on-line. As technology continues to grow exponentially, we expect the variety of on-line courses to grow as well.

24. Question: Massive projects involving technology often fails (sic), not because of difficulties with technology, but a failure on administrative function. Will this program include sufficient resources for administrative support, e.g., student records, coordination, help desk, etc.?

Response: Army recognizes the success of this program is clearly dependent on the student support services. The Draft Request for Proposal addresses this requirement.

Army expects the 'integrator' to ensure that all participants have the support necessary for success.

25. Question: Does the Army expect to have points of contact at all Army sites participating in the program?

Response: At the initial implementation sites, there is a requirement for an On-Site Manager for the first year of the program.

26. Question: Have you considered using existing Army learning centers for the initial role-out (sic) of Army University Access On-Line? This format could provide greater flexibility of content delivery.

Response: Army Learning Centers (ALC) will have a critical support role in this program. We are programming for expanded hours of operation and soldiers will be free to come in to ALCs to plug in their laptops as they wish.

27. Question: The Secretary referred to a need for a wide variety of choice, including opportunity to enroll with a hometown college. How do you envision educational partners of Army University Access On-Line to support soldiers in earning credit through such a widespread range of OTHER educational institutions?

Response: As the Secretary mentioned, Army wants to offer soldiers as many choices as possible. Soldiers currently can enroll in the Army's Concurrent Admission Program (CONAP) upon enlistment. The CONAP allows a soldier to be admitted to their 'hometown' college before entering the military and then defer attendance until his/her enlistment is complete with guaranteed admission. We hope many CONAP schools will want to participate in Army University Access On-line as well. Transferability of credit is also a critical piece of a successful program. We must ensure soldiers can transfer Army University Access On-line credits to other schools should they so desire. Other requirements of Army University Access On-line as stipulated in the Draft Request for Proposal must also be met.

28. Question: Why is the Army going to designate or select educational institutions to participate in AUAO? Why not allow the soldier to select his/her own on-line college, university, or other education provider, with full tuition assistance only for accredited institutions?

Response: By contracting with selected institutions, Army seeks to find a cost effective means to offer soldiers fully funded degree and certificate programs. Contracted institutions will be assured of a return on their investment. Soldiers will receive streamlined on-line degree opportunities that maximize military experience and training and other nontraditional credit.

29. Question: General Frost mentioned that the more options, the better. How do you propose the prime vendor includes every soldier's hometown university or college on the team? In addition, each of these institutions have varying standards and cross credit transfers may not be feasible. Your thoughts?

Response: Army recognizes it is not feasible for the prime vendor to include every soldier's hometown school. We do want as many degree and certificate programs as possible. Transferability of credit is an issue that must be considered. Schools that belong to the Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges agree to transfer credit from

similarly accredited colleges with minimum loss and duplication. This is an important issue for schools to consider.

30. Question: Many high profile leading institutions require SATs and GMATs for admission into their programs. If soldiers have not completed or do not wish to take these qualifying examinations, it will limit participation. What are your thoughts on this issue?

Response: Alternative admissions requirements should be available to adult continuing education students to ensure they are not penalized by stringent, often inappropriate, admissions requirements. Most of the Army's Servicemember Opportunity Colleges partners recognize that standardized tests like the SAT are not the best predictor of an adult student's college success and offer alternative requirements. These alternatives assess college prep skills, identifying areas that must be remediated to ensure college-level success.

31. Question: There is probably no single institution here today with an on-line course inventory to meet the needs of all soldiers. What is the expectation for institutions to build and deliver courses on-line?

Response: We do not expect schools to build new courses specifically for this initiative. We understand it will take creative partnerships amongst a variety of institutions to meet the Army's needs. Consortia partnerships will expand degree offerings.

32. Question: Any thoughts to choosing one Learning Management System for this portal? Otherwise students will need to learn to navigate a number of systems if they take courses from different institutions.

Response: We will require the contractor to create a 'portal' program delivery system, which will provide a streamlined, seamless approach to on-line delivery for soldiers. We are seeking feedback during this request for information process on appropriate portal and Learning Management System requirements.

33. Question: Will the one contract address all the different opportunities that are reflective of the needs of a diverse population (i.e., associates degrees, health professions of pharmacy, nursing, medicine, as well as MS degrees)? How will collaborative efforts among vendors be fostered?

Response: Yes, the Draft Request for Proposal requires the contractor to offer a wide variety of certificate and degree programs. We are posting all the names of Industry Day participants on the Army University Access On-line web-site in an effort to assist collaborative efforts. Vendors also had the opportunity to network at the Army's Industry Day. There are also many professional organizations (i.e., Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges, Distance Education and Training Council, American Association of Colleges and Universities) that can also be instrumental in fostering creative collaboration.

34. Question: To what extent is the university access on-line initiative aimed at graduate degree work?

Response: While the majority of enlisted soldiers are working on undergraduate or certificate programs, many wish to earn a graduate degree as well.

35. **Question:** How will the Army ensure the expectation of an associate degree will be a realistic goal in the first term? Previous 11-year average now in 3 years?

Response: Based on student profiles from the University of Maryland University College, the average time required to complete a two-year associate degree program is currently seven years. Army leadership is committed to this initiative and is fully aware of the critical value of educated soldiers in achieving the Army's mission. They also fully understand there **MUST** be command support for education to ensure soldier success. The expectation is that a disciplined, mature, motivated soldier who is college-ready will be able to earn a two-year degree during a four-year enlistment. Soldiers must understand they will be required to devote most of their off-duty time to school to accomplish this.

36. **Question:** Does it have to be a 2-year program, i.e., associate or bachelor after associate degree?

Response: No, Army University Access On-line will offer certificate, associate, bachelor's, and master's degree programs to soldiers.

37. **Question:** Because there are many universities here with different accreditation, please define the accreditation level you will require.

Response: To ensure quality programs, all partnering institutions must be accredited by accrediting associations/agencies recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.

38. **Question:** What skills and/or degree programs are of greatest need to the Army and greatest interest to soldiers?

Response: The Army's education program provides degree programs that are based on soldier/family member needs and interests. Degree programs of greatest interest to soldiers, based on Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges 2/4 Student Data Reports, are listed in descending order below:

- Two year associate level - General Studies; Interdisciplinary Studies; Criminal Justice; Management; Computer Studies; General Business; Business Administration; Automotive Maintenance; Information Systems Management; and, Food Service Management.
- Four year baccalaureate level - Interdisciplinary Studies; Business Administration; Professional Aeronautics; Information Systems Management; Management; Computer Studies; Criminal Justice; Human Resources Management; Accounting; and, Health Services Management.

39. **Question:** If this educational opportunity is so critical, why not provide on-duty time to certain students in certain locations, to work on their courses?

Response: Recognizing the critical value of education to the Army, many commanders already designate specific on-duty time for education, especially during the unit's 'in-garrison' training cycle. Army will continue to strongly encourage commanders to support education opportunities whenever training schedules allow.

40. Question: Do you have a feel for how many students you will have in this first phase (January 2001)?

Response: Provided we are able to offer soldiers a wide variety of degree and certificate choices, we anticipate between 15,000 and 20,000 soldiers will participate during the first year of implementation.

41. Question: What percentage of the 116,000 students participating in installation-based programs will participate in eArmyU? How many additional students are expected to participate?

Response: We anticipate this program will be very popular amongst soldiers provided we are able to offer them a wide variety of degree and certificate options and we are able to offer 100 percent tuition assistance for tuition, books, fees, and the technology package. Many will want to try on-line education to see if it meets their needs. And of course, we imagine the attraction of their own laptop will be significant. The flexibility inherent in on-line education makes it naturally very attractive to soldiers. However, subsequent enrollments will be contingent upon a soldier's initial success. And this success hinges in large part on the quality of contractor's support services. Actual percentages and numbers of participants are impossible to predict at this point but we believe enrollments will increase.

42. Question: In order to estimate what can be delivered over 6 years, what is the number of soldiers estimated to participate over this period?

Response: The number of estimated course enrollments will be addressed in the Draft Request for Proposal.

43. Question: Will it be possible for educational providers to participate in the program after the contract has been awarded? In other words, can the providers be recruited throughout the contract award period?

Response: Army is very interested in the contractor adding new course offerings as well as degree and certificate programs during the life of the contract.

44. Question: What is your average cost per credit hour now? Do you seek to lower this by such an on-line program?

Response: The average cost per semester hour for FY99 was \$220.00 and the average cost for FY00 (year to date) is \$231.00. We are of course, interested in the most cost effective, quality program possible.

45. Question: Mainline state universities typically have course fees set by boards of representatives at the state level. Is a model that respects the existing fee structures of interest to the Army?

Response: All fees must be included in the fixed price.

46. Question: What are your plans to work with agencies (federal) that do not recognize DL degrees (e.g., FBI) or ask that students in voc rehab sit in a classroom?

Response: Army will continue to offer both traditional classroom-based programs as well as on-line programs. These programs meet Army needs. The Army can not speak for other agencies.

47. Question: Many soldiers have experienced great difficulty in relation to transcript services. Is this one of the areas of emphasis you would expect this one sole provider to resolve for the U.S. Army?

Response: The Army must ensure soldiers receive transcripts of Army University Access On-line credits in a timely, cost-effective manner. Soldiers must also be able to request transcripts on-line. This will be the contractor's responsibility.

48. Question: What are the legal implications associated with tuition assistance being set-aside for an on-line program?

Response: The law allows for tuition assistance for post-secondary programs that provide for increased military competencies and leadership skills. It also allows for programs of study that assist soldiers to transition to the civilian workplace. The law does not address mode of delivery for post-secondary programs.

49. Question: What about requirements for hands-on experience in some educational programs?

Response: The Army University Access On-line program must be offered to soldiers as a completely on-line program to meet their flexible educational needs. Traditional program offerings with a hands-on requirement will continue to be an important component of Army education programs and services.

50. Question: Where are the two to three sites where the program will be initially offered?

Response: The initial sites for implementation are anticipated to be selected in the near future. The Army will evaluate numerous potential sites within the Continental United States for initial implementation.

51. Question: Will you expect (or permit) bidders to propose the initial installations for implementation?

Response: The Army does not expect bidders to propose the initial installations. The Army will determine the initial sites.

52. Question: Will the Army support legislative/regulatory reform to allow soldiers use of multiple funding sources to meet total costs?

Response: The Army is currently supporting proposed legislation to allow 100% Tuition Assistance to be paid for those soldiers enrolled in this initiative.

53. Question: What role/oversight will the Army have in the Contractor's choice of providers?

Response: The Army anticipates that the potential Contractor will most likely include a team or consortium that coordinates the network of participating universities or colleges and manages the Technology Package and internet services. The prime contractor is solely responsible for assembling its consortium or team. The Army's oversight role is to ensure that the prime, and/or its consortium/team members have not been debarred or suspended or declared ineligible to receive Federal contracts. The Government will determine whether the prime contractor is a responsible contractor and complies with the contractual terms and conditions.

54. Question: Aren t there possibly two proposals, or a two-part proposal? 1 Proposal for the single portal provider. 2 Proposal from on-line education providers who want to participate.

Response: The Army anticipates making a single contract award to either a consortium/teaming arrangement which will provide all required services and supplies. This does not preclude a single degree-granting institution (subcontracting for the Technology Package and Internet services) or a single systems integrator (subcontracting for the education requirements and/or Technology Package). The composition of the successful Offeror to provide for the Army s requirements is limited only by the resources and methods employed by academia and industry.

55. Question: Given the timeframe and scope of this RFP, I would assume a limited number of organizations will be positioned to respond as integrators. Would it be possible for Army to designate a standard template from your website for potential subcontractors to submit product/service and qualifications for consideration by the potential integrator? This would allow the integrators to have access to a wealth of quality, subcontractor providers.

Response: The term integrator may be confusing to academia and industry. The term is interchangeable for the educational institution, systems integrators and/or hardware and software service entities. The Prime entity of a consortium or teaming arrangement, or a Prime Contractor with subcontractor participation, is the sole integrator in providing the supplies and service requirements of the Army.

56. Question: Please explain Booz Allen s role in this procurement. Are they precluded from proposing on this acquisition?

Response: Two contractors (Booz-Allen and Hamilton Incorporated and Resource Consultants Incorporated) have assisted the Government in preparing and providing acquisition administrative support services. As a result of their participation both contractors are precluded from submitting a proposal as a prime contractor or being proposed as a partner, joint venture, teaming arrangement member or subcontractor by other interested firms in response to the solicitation. Accordingly, any firm proposing either contractor as a potential subcontractor, partner, joint venture, or as part of a team member arrangement is ineligible to receive a contract award under the solicitation. Offerors and other interested parties are further advised that Booz-Allen & Hamilton, in supporting the Army s acquisition process, will have access to proposal and proprietary information.

57. Question: What evaluation criteria will form the basis of this award?

Response: Army will evaluate proposals on the quality/scope of degree programs, technical and management approach, past performance, subcontracting plan, and price. Selection will be made using a best value approach. The evaluation factors, sub-factors and order of importance are provided in the draft RFP. These factors may be refined based on input received from the draft RFP. Potential offerors should rely on the factors and criteria that are stated in the final solicitation.

58. Question: How will past performance be evaluated?

Response: The evaluation criteria for past performance are provided in the draft RFP. These subfactors may be refined based on input received from the draft RFP. Potential offerors should rely on the criteria that are stated in the final solicitation.

59. **Question:** Who will own and account for the equipment issued to the soldier (printer, PC, software, etc.)?

Response: Title to the Technology Package will be vested in the Contractor upon acquisition from the subcontracted suppliers or service providers (or as appropriate, its teaming partners in accordance with the established teaming agreement). The Prime entity will deliver the Technology Package to the students in accordance with the on-line education agreement entered into between the Prime and the student. Upon the completion of 5 on-line education courses, title to the Technology Package will vest in the student.

60. **Question:** What mechanism will be used for developing the partnerships?

Response: The development of partnerships, joint ventures, teaming arrangements or the use of subcontractors is a business decision that can only be made by Offerors and other interested parties in response to the solicitation.

61. **Question:** What is the role of small businesses, 8(a)s, SDBs, etc.? Is there a set-aside for these small businesses?

Response: The Offeror is required to submit a subcontracting plan in accordance with the clauses at FAR 52.219-9 and DFARS 252.219-7003. The Government anticipates including evaluating the subcontracting plan as part of the evaluation of proposals received in response to the solicitation. In addition, the Army anticipates past performance evaluation criteria to include the Offeror's successful use of subcontractors exclusive of subsidiary companies. The language for these inclusions have not been formalized and approved as yet.

62. **Question:** Soldiers are issued laptop computers, how much impact will value-added benefits such as help desk assistance and repair services have on the decision to award?

Response: The evaluation criteria include the value added benefits for support services and technology infrastructure regarding the quality and scope of the Offeror's degree programs and quality control plan. Price will also be evaluated, inclusive of the costs to provide such services and technology infrastructure.

63. **Question:** Will contractor selection be based on prototype demonstrations as well as formal written submission?

Response: The Army may elect to consider a demonstration of the internet services to be provided, based on what is currently in place with the Offeror's consortium members and/or teaming partners. Language and approval of this requirement has not been approved as yet.

64. **Question:** What organization within the Army will be responsible for Program Management and will be the direct interface with the consortium?

Response: The responsible Army organization has been tentatively identified; however, the Army is not at liberty to divulge the information until approved by the Army Staff. The DSS-W Contracting Officer will designate a Contracting Officer's Representative (COR) at time of award to serve as the liaison between the Contracting Officer and the Contractor (prime entity of a consortium or teaming arrangement). A copy of the Contracting Officer's designation (setting forth COR's

duties, responsibilities and prohibitions) will be provided to the Contractor at time of award.

65. **Question:** Suggestion for collaborating with National Guard Training programs?

Response: There is no planned collaboration with National Guard Training Programs at the present time.

66. **Question:** Publicize small/minority business subcontracting goals?

Response: The Army's small/minority subcontracting goals will be identified in both the draft and final solicitation.

67. **Question:** Concerns about fixed price contract placing all risk on contractor?

Response: The Army intends to issue a solicitation for Commercial Items under Part 12 of the Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR). FAR subpart 12.207 requires Federal Agencies to use Firm-Fixed-Price contracts or Fixed-Price with Economic Adjustment contracts for the acquisition of commercial items. A Firm-Fixed-Price contract is suitable when --- (a) adequate price competition, (b) reasonable price comparisons with prior purchases of the same or similar supplies/services, (c) available cost/price information permits reasonable estimates of the cost for performance, or (d) performance uncertainties can be identified and reasonable estimates of their cost impact can be made. A Fixed-Price with Economic Adjustment type contract would only be used when there is serious doubt concerning the labor conditions that will exist during an extended period of contractual performance. The Contracting Officer has determined that labor conditions will not affect the procurement.

68. **Question:** What about using a using two-step approach for the procurement?

Response: The two-step approach is primarily used under FAR Part 14 for Sealed Bidding, and is a combination of competitive procedures designed to obtain the benefits of sealed bidding when adequate specifications are not available. The Army believes that the Performance-Based Work Statement (PBWS) developed for this Program adequately defines the requirements and needs of the Army. The Army intends to evaluate offers on the basis of best value. This means that the selection process used in determining who will receive the award will be based upon factors other than just price. This process is used in competitive negotiated acquisitions to select the most advantageous offer to the Army, chosen by evaluating and comparing factors, such as contract terms, technical approach and quality, in addition to price. As such, sealed bidding would not afford the Army of evaluating offers on factors other than lowest price.

69. **Question:** Need to clarify selection criteria (i.e., larger group of providers versus smaller group with better overall quality)?

Response: The Offeror is solely responsible for the composition of its consortium, teaming arrangements or use of subcontractors. The provision of quality on-line educational instructional services and the Contractor's ability to meet (or exceed) performance objectives and standards is the responsibility of the Contractor under the Performance-Based Work Statement (PBWS). The use of larger or smaller groups is a business decision of the Offeror.

70. **Question:** Part 1 - The Army should decide which community colleges, colleges and universities, etc. your students should be attending. A quick survey of the two installations should provide feedback on what types of courses, classes, degrees, certifications your students want. Have your students vote and decide which five different educational institutions will be involved in the initial offering. Then the Army would advise the five schools and ask them to respond to a yes-we are or no-we are-not interested response. Those that accept will be contacted by the software provider in the future.

Response: The Army University Access On-Line Program is an opportunity for the soldier to acquire post-secondary education and a degree, in addition to the other opportunity programs offered by the Army. Regulations require the Contracting Officer to provide for full and open competition through the use of competitive procedures. Although soldiers are involved in selecting courses, they have no authority to individually select a contractor.

Question: Part 2 - After the Army has chosen the five universities, one RFP would be issued for software and infrastructure. The other RFP would be issued for hardware and the help desk.

Response: The provision of the Technology Package, Internet services, and support services must be included in the tuition cost as part of one RFP.

71. **Question:** Will there be any requirements for the successful bidder regarding communications security?

Response: The successful bidder shall be required to satisfy best commercial practices and current Internet information security practices.

72. **Question:** In reference to education, any place/anywhere: Will semi-, mobile-, and full-rugged COTS laptop be a consideration for on-line education any place/anywhere?

Response: There is no requirement for a ruggedized technology package, the best practical value for the technology package as a functional subset to the overall educational requirements is the selection criteria.

73. **Question:** Have you considered obtaining information technology assets (i.e., laptops, printers, desktop computers, etc.) identified as excess within all of DoD?

Response: Government Furnished Equipment (GFE) was considered not to be in the best interest in the execution of the intent of the program. The technology package needs to be able to maintain currency with the educational technical requirements.

74. **Question:** Will you consider quality of service in terms of broad bandwidth as a selection criteria? If the program is DL, why limit to one or two institutions vice all soldiers to their home? Who selects the one to two institutions?

Response: The ability to deliver a sufficient and reliable quality of service is a criterion, broad band is only one of several possible connectivity solutions that could be part of the delivery of the educational materiel. There is no limitation as to where the student can access the educational materiel (on or off post housing, libraries or education centers are only a few possible locations students could possibly take classes from), the installations serve as administrative centers to initiate the program.

75. **Question:** In light of the projects quality standards, and the congestion, delay, and packet loss of the internet, has any thought been given to a broadband delivery system, as opposed to the internet and dial up service?

Response: Yes. The goal of the program is use technologies currently locally available to access the educational materiel; if other possible connectivity solutions can be provided at all installations at a comparable cost; then it could possibly be considered.

76. **Question:** Will all offerors be required to be in compliance with the new Sharable Course Object Reference Model (SCORM) technical standards now being developed by the Department of Defense?

Question: Is there a specific technical compliance standard that the provider must be compliant in (i.e., ADL-COLAB SCORM)?

Question: What role will ADL Initiative s SCORM standards play in selecting academic partners for the AUAO?

Response: The use of an interoperable, open architecture for a distributed learning environment is which learning content (course and lesson modules) can be accessed from a wide variety of (higher education) sources and delivered to learners anytime and anywhere is key to the success of the Army University Access On-line. Evolving standards such as SCORM should be considered (however, is not mandated) by developers in courseware development.